

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
17th May 2010
Report of the Corporate Director (Children, Young People and Families)
An Update on Key Issues

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present members of SACRE with a brief update on key issues that have developed or arisen since the last meeting of SACRE.

2 Summary

2.1 Members of SACRE will receive a brief report on a number of key issues. These are matters which have either been raised at previous SACRE meetings and which have moved forward, or matters on which it is appropriate to brief members of SACRE.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members of SACRE receive the report and note the contents

4 Background

4.1 Since the spring term meeting of the SACRE there have been developments in a number of areas which had previously been agenda items for SACRE or which have local or national importance for RE.

4.2 Members will be briefed on these key developments. A summary is attached to this paper.

5 Equal Opportunities

5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

6 Financial implications

6.1 Financial implications may be raised by individual items. These have been dealt with elsewhere, or will be raised at future meetings of SACRE.

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The Student Council for Religious Education

The Student Council met on March 5th and April 29th 2010. In response to requests from Councillors that the meetings should finish earlier than 4.15, the format of the sessions has been reviewed. Students now arrive at the Seabridge Centre mid-morning and leave just after 2.00. This has also meant that there is time in the morning for invited guests to talk at some length, while leaving the afternoon free for Council business. The guest on the 5th was Alan Foster, School Improvement Division Officer and practising Mormon. His session was well received, and councillors asked some thoughtful questions. On April 29th, Hifsa Haroon Iqbal and Afshan Haque presented a Muslim perspective and again responded to questions. This format seems to be very popular. The minutes of the meeting held on March 5th are attached. Those for April 29th will be presented at the meeting.

Funding for the Student Council

A bid to the Staffordshire Study Support initiative to provide funding for the Student Council has been successful. A budget of £3717 has been granted to meet the cost of transport, shirts and refreshments. This will mean that the Council can be a little more adventurous in its activities!

Recruitment and retention

Since the last meeting the following posts have been advertised within Staffordshire:

Head of Religious Education: Cheslyn Hay Sport and Community High School, Sir Thomas Boughey High School.

7 Newly Qualified Teachers joined the county in September but two have since left their schools.

Subject Focused inspections

Following a one year break, Staffordshire has again had a subject focused inspection in RE led by Jackie Wordsworth. Cheslyn Hay Sport and Community High School was inspected on March 21st and 22nd. The department was judged to be good.

Meet the Muslims

This is a new, informal initiative. Teachers, SACRE members and SID employees were invited to attend a twilight session with Hifsa Haroon Iqbal and Afshan Haque as guests. Hifsa and Afshan gave a brief introduction to their faith and the work of the Muslim community in Stafford before inviting questions. Just under twenty people attended and the response was excellent. It is hoped that other members of SACRE may be prevailed upon to offer their services for similar sessions.

Meet the Jains

An approach has been made by Colin Hynson who is the educational consultant for the Institute of Jainology. Colin has offered free training to the LA and will be leading a morning session on October 13th 2010. Although Colin is not a Jain himself, he will be bringing with him a colleague who is a member of the faith. Members of SACRE are cordially invited to attend the session.

Offers: Student Handbook for Religious Education

In the spring term, 150 copies of the Student Handbook were sold to Staffordshire schools. A further 150 copies were ordered to meet demand. These compact reference books are ideal for teachers in primary schools looking for concise information about the six major faiths.

Primary/Secondary monitoring

Pressure of work to support the launch of the Agreed Syllabus and to prepare for a new Senior Adviser for RE has meant that monitoring questionnaires have not yet been issued to primary schools. These will be sent into selected primary schools as soon as possible

Secondary monitoring forms have now been received from all butschools.

The Senior Adviser for RE

An advertisement for the post of Senior Adviser for Religious Education was placed in the county bulletin in April. There have been a number of expressions of interest. The closing date for applications was May 14th 2010 and interviews will take place on Wednesday 26th May. Members will be kept informed of developments.

Approach by Muslims in Burton on Trent

Members were advised at the last meeting that there had been an expression of interest in providing a representative of the Burton Muslim community to the SACRE. No further contact had been made since the last meeting.

Minutes of the Staffordshire Student Council for Religious Education

Date	5 th March 2010
Time	10.00 till 2.15
Location	Seabridge Centre

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes and matters arising
3. Welcome to new members
4. An update on events since the last meeting
5. The Annual Report
6. What's the story?
7. Future projects, future meetings

Dates of future meetings:

29 th April 2010	Council Meeting
17 th June 2010	Council Meeting
30 th June 2010	SACRE Awards

2 Minutes and matters arising

The group agreed to Heather sending Lauren Cartwright a 'get well soon' card, as she has not been well and could not join us today.

Heather explained to the group about the SACRE awards. Members have the opportunity to nominate someone for an award, someone that they feel has made a contribution to Religious Education; this can be a teacher, a pupil or another member of SSCRE.

The fundraising for St Giles' Hospice was discussed in school groups, and it was decided that, if possible, each school should raise some money this year. Ideas had moved on from the 'pyjama day' to a non-uniform day, or a 'dress as a pirate' day.

The council discussed guest speakers; the group had much enjoyed and benefited from the Mormon speaker Alan. For future guests, the possibility of the two Muslim women was still popular, as was the Jehovah's Witness and Jewish guests. Heather will try to arrange the Muslim women for the next meeting. It was agreed that a Scientologist would be inappropriate, but Hannah and Harriet will do some research and bring a PowerPoint presentation to the next meeting, for some background information.

3 Welcome to new members

It was Jess Cai's first meeting, and as she had missed the introduction to SSCRE last meeting, the group explained briefly what the council involves. Jess had signed her commitment to the council, which was witnessed by other members.

The group agreed that the formal setting works well for meetings, but that they would like more debating time during meetings. Next meeting, time for a debate will be allotted, with a subject matter of current ethical issues. Suggestions were made of the euthanasia cases that have been followed in the news, or the allegations of Gordon Brown's bullying. Heather encouraged something with a direct religious perspective, and Harriet suggested the issue of homosexuality within the church, based on the lesbian woman that has been appointed as a vicar in America.

This debate is to be had on SSCRE's Facebook page and continued briefly at a meeting, which all new members can join. The Facebook name is "SSCRE Flapjack".

4. An update on events since the last meeting

Most of the events since last meeting had been covered in agenda items two and three. Lauren Woodward had recently turned 18, which opened a discussion about voting. The group repeated their appreciation of having Alan join the meeting, and commented that his sincerity and honesty had made the morning very helpful and interesting. Heather updated the council on the latest SACRE meeting, and Michael emphasised the fact that the SACRE members would value some SSCRE councillors to attend a meeting. The next meeting will be on 12th May in Stafford. Hannah suggested filming the council having a debate which could then be shown at a SACRE meeting, and uploaded onto the Facebook page to show what it is SSCRE does.

5 The Annual Report

6 What's the story?

These two agenda items were combined, as councillors spoke to the group about things that they are individually involved in. Esther and Becky are going to Auschwitz later in the year, and they will speak to the group about their experiences afterwards. Katie spoke about her gap year. Leading up to a degree in social work, she will be doing youth work in schools and estates in South East London, with the Christian organisation XLP. Harriet is going to study Law in America this year, and she hopes to apply her Religious Education there to ethical issues such as capital punishment. Stephen is hoping to be a surgeon, applying issues such as euthanasia and suicide with a medical perspective. Lizz is involved in a South Africa project with her church and local high schools, taking a group in the summer to visit and work with two charities, which will benefit both the people visiting and the groups working with the charities. Dan spoke about his interest in music. He plays the trumpet and tuba, and will be playing in a music festival next week. He will investigate the role of music in religion, including the contemporary styles of worship, for example Christian rock. Liz told the council about her leadership of a Cub group; she started this for her Duke of Edinburgh, and now continues this despite it not counting towards her D of E Gold award. She spoke of the sense of achievement and fulfilment that she gets from both the D of E and Cubs. Hannah had also done Duke of Edinburgh Gold award, and shared Liz's feeling of achievement. Ellie has an interest in animals, keeping ducks, and would like to do something in the area of animal psychology as a career. Robert commented on how RE helps him in working in Next, especially dealing with customers. Also, Next supports ethical issues by selling Fairtrade products and donating money to Newlife. Kathryn and Lauren are going to V Festival this summer, and will investigate modern music and culture. Heather asked each member to write their Annual Report article on the subject that they spoke about, and those that did not speak were encouraged to give some thought to their article.

7. Future projects, future meetings

It was agreed that the 10am start for meetings was better than the previous set up, and dedicating the morning to the guest speaker had been beneficial. This will be the structure for future meetings. Hannah will be in charge of putting together a journal of councillor's comments on guest speakers, to show people what SSCRE does. For this, members that read the Book of Mormon will give comments on it. The council had not had time to design a new SSCRE poster; this will be done at a future meeting. Heather gave ideas for this year's poster, with the possibility of "RE is coool". Heather showed the group the range of previous posters that the council has designed in the past.